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INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Traffic in women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 2000/44, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Secretary-General to provide it, at its fifty-seventh session, with an update on the report on activities of United Nations bodies and other international organizations pertaining to the problem of trafficking in women and girls. The present report, which updates information included in the report submitted at the last session of the Commission (E/CN.4/2000/66), is submitted in accordance with that resolution.

I. ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS BODIES

A. The human rights system

2. Human rights treaty monitoring bodies have continued to pay particular attention to the issue of trafficking in examining reports of States parties. In particular, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Human Rights Committee (HRC) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) have recently made specific reference to trafficking and related exploitation in a number of concluding observations/comments. Concluding observations on the issue of trafficking include those adopted by CESCR on Portugal, Kyrgyzstan and Italy; by HRC on Argentina, Peru, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia; by CEDAW on Austria, Lithuania, Romania, Burkina Faso, Germany, India, Luxembourg and Myanmar; and by CRC on the initial reports of Guinea, Benin, Venezuela, Mali, the Netherlands, India, South Africa, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia and Tajikistan, and on the second periodic reports of Honduras, the Russian Federation, Mexico and Colombia.

3. The General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights continue to emphasize the human rights dimension of the problem of trafficking in women and girls. Trafficking was a subject of discussion at the special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" ("Beijing + 5"), which was held from 5 to 9 June 2000. Specific recommendations and further initiatives and measures to implement the Beijing Platform for Action with regard to trafficking in women and girls were adopted by the special session.

4. A number of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, both thematic and country specific, have also continued to address trafficking in persons - especially women and children. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women focused her report to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights (2000) on the question of trafficking in women from the perspective of the women's movement in general and the human rights violations perpetrated during the course of that movement in particular. The focus of the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography during 2000 has been on the question of trafficking in children and the report of the Special Rapporteur to the present session of the Commission reflects that focus.

5. Several of the country mechanisms have raised the issue of trafficking in their investigations and reports. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar has noted reports of women being trafficked from that country. The Special Rapporteur on the

situation of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia confirms that trafficking of persons for the purpose of forced prostitution has emerged as a major human rights concern in the region.

6. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights addresses the issue of trafficking in persons through the activities of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. As reported previously, the Working Group gave priority consideration to the issue of trafficking in persons at its twenty-fourth session (1999) and subsequently decided to devote its twenty-sixth session (June 2001) to the follow-up of progress made to combat trafficking in persons, with an emphasis on women and children. At each of its sessions, the Working Group adopts specific recommendations on trafficking in persons and regularly receives information from participants, in particular non-governmental organizations.

7. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and the Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery have continued their close collaborative relationship. The Working Group's recent practice of determining priority issues in advance has allowed the Board of Trustees of the Fund to provide timely and relevant travel and project grants to NGOs. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in its resolution 2000/12 noted with satisfaction the participation of a growing number of representatives of NGOs financed by the Fund and their valuable contribution to the work of the Working Group at its twenty-fifth session. Seventeen travel grants and 17 project grants were approved by the High Commissioner in 2000. The sixth session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund will take place in Geneva from 22 to 26 January 2001. The Board will consider applications for travel and project grants and since the main theme of the twenty-sixth session of the Working Group will be trafficking in persons, the Board will give priority to this issue. I encourage new donors to contribute to the Fund on a regular basis to enable the Fund and Board to fulfil its mandate effectively.

8. The Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography completed its work by finalizing the text of the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol was subsequently adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly. The text is now open for signature and ratification. While the text of the Optional Protocol does not refer specifically to trafficking, the link between trafficking and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography is a direct one. The Working Group recognized this reality in its deliberations and it is hoped that the Optional Protocol will prove to be an additional tool in the fight against trafficking and related exploitation of children.

9. As detailed in the previous report, the High Commissioner for Human Rights has, since late 1998, given priority to the issue of trafficking. The focus of the work of her Office (OHCHR) in this area continues to be on two fronts: (a) enhancing the quality of OHCHR support to relevant mechanisms dealing with trafficking and related issues; and (b) developing and implementing a specific anti-trafficking programme. In relation to the first area of focus, the intra-office system established within OHCHR continues its in-house coordination by sharing information on new developments on the issue of trafficking.

10. The objective of the OHCHR Anti-Trafficking Programme remains the integration of human rights into international, regional and national anti-trafficking initiatives. Emphasis is on legal and policy development. The Programme does not aim to undertake large projects or to otherwise duplicate the various initiatives which are being undertaken elsewhere. Instead, as far as possible, OHCHR tries to act as a catalyst and a support for the work of others.

11. With the goal of providing policy guidance and leadership on the issue of trafficking, OHCHR is currently in the process of developing guidelines for the integration of human rights into national, regional and international anti-trafficking initiatives. The guidelines will provide a practical tool for Governments as well as international organizations including agencies and programmes within the United Nations system. They will be linked to (and seek to facilitate effective implementation of) the provisions of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime recently adopted by the General Assembly (see para. 19 below). The guidelines will also deal with the related issue of migrant smuggling. The High Commissioner has designated three experts to assist her in developing these guidelines as well as to advise her team more generally in policy formulation and strategic intervention in the area of trafficking. The experts met with the High Commissioner and Programme staff in July 2000 and further meetings are scheduled for 2001. The work of this informal group during 2001 is expected to focus heavily on the draft guidelines. Input will also be sought from governmental and non-governmental organizations active in trafficking prevention and response.

12. At the international level, OHCHR continued its close involvement in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime - particularly in relation to its elaboration of a Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In view of the close connection between trafficking and migrant smuggling, OHCHR also focused its attention on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on developing an international instrument against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air. OHCHR participated in meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee throughout 2000 and made a number of written and oral interventions aimed at securing appropriate recognition of the need to protect the rights of trafficked persons and smuggled migrants. Of particular note was an inter-agency statement concerning both protocols submitted by OHCHR, UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Organization for Migration to the Ad Hoc Committee in early 2000 (A/AC.254/27 and Corr.1). The statement contained specific recommendations for strengthening the draft text of both instruments by enhancing protection provisions and ensuring adequate and appropriate links to existing international human rights instruments and standards. Recommendations made by OHCHR and other international agencies were discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee and are reflected, to some extent, in the final text of both instruments.

13. The OHCHR Trafficking Programme has continued its regional focus with a number of important initiatives at both the regional and subregional levels. In the context of the preparatory process of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, OHCHR organized a seminar for the Asian-Pacific region on "Migrants and trafficking in persons with particular reference to women and children" in Bangkok from 5 to 7 September 2000. The seminar recommended that strategies to combat trafficking be

comprehensive and multisectoral in their approach. They should be directed towards: (i) addressing the root causes of poverty: lack of education, awareness, equal access to productive resources and employment; (ii) protection strategies that address aspects pertaining to the safe rescue, return and reintegration of persons who have been trafficked; (iii) promotion, through the enactment of appropriate laws at the national level, of the effective investigation of cases and the prosecution of traffickers; (iv) regional and bilateral reciprocal arrangements and mechanisms to promote the harmonization of laws and practices in the region; and (v) sensitizing State actors to the experiences and needs of women and children who are at risk of being, and who have been trafficked.

14. Since 1999, OHCHR has been implementing a joint trafficking prevention programme for Eastern and Central Europe with the Council of Europe. OHCHR also worked with the Council of Europe in the organization of a seminar in Athens (June 2000) aimed at developing a subregional plan of action against trafficking in human beings in South-Eastern Europe. The cooperation between OHCHR and the Council of Europe is particularly important in view of the establishment of a Task Force on Trafficking under the Stability Pact (see further, para. 33 below). OHCHR hopes to cooperate closely with the Task Force throughout the coming year.

15. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, OHCHR has been one of the lead agencies in the region in the fight against trafficking. In the framework of its cooperation with the Council of Europe in the region, OHCHR took the lead in setting up a trafficking working group within the gender coordination group (GCG). The GCG aims at coordinating work on the mainstreaming of gender and includes representatives of NGO coalitions and gender focal points within certain ministries. Further to that initiative, the Council of Ministers has decided to set up a working group on trafficking to be coordinated by the Ministry of European Integration. A focal point has been appointed urgently to draw up a national plan of action to combat trafficking, with the assistance of OHCHR.

16. In Croatia, OHCHR is cooperating with IOM to share information and to set in motion the creation of a task force against trafficking.

17. OHCHR continues to give priority to the problem of trafficking in Asia and has used the OHCHR office in Cambodia as the focal point for its efforts in this region. OHCHR Cambodia is now in the process of developing a strategy to combat trafficking. In that regard, the office has set up a unit on trafficking in order to mainstream trafficking in its internal structure. OHCHR Cambodia is also involved in the newly established Cambodian National Working Group on Trafficking. It is also part of the coordinating mechanisms at the regional level and is involved in a number of major regional initiatives against trafficking, and to this end works closely with a range of international governmental and non-governmental organizations including UNICEF, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO/IPEC), IOM and ECPAT.

18. In Asia and elsewhere, OHCHR is also working with individual Governments to assist them in developing and implementing a human rights approach to trafficking and related exploitation. In Nepal for example, OHCHR is closely involved in a comprehensive

United Nations systemwide project which seeks to address the problem of trafficking of Nepalese women and girls. The project will address a range of causative factors including poverty and inequality. OHCHR input is focusing on strengthening judicial and law enforcement responses to trafficking and on enhancing subregional cooperation in this area.

B. The crime prevention and criminal justice system

19. Perhaps the most important trafficking-related development within the United Nations system was the recent adoption by the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and protocols. Of specific relevance to the present report are two of the three protocols supplementing the Convention: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. The Convention and its protocols were opened for signature in December 2000 at a high-level conference in Palermo, Italy. The Trafficking Protocol is intended to "prevent and combat" trafficking in persons and to facilitate international cooperation against such trafficking. It provides for criminal offences and control and cooperation measures against traffickers. It also provides measures to protect and assist victims. States parties to the protocol are obliged to criminalize a range of trafficking-related offences. The Protocol is intended to cover cases where human beings are exploited by organized crime groups where there is an element of duress involved and a transnational aspect, such as the movement of persons across a border or their exploitation within a country by a transnational organized crime group. The Protocol adopts a broad definition of trafficking, reflecting the wide range of means and end-purposes which characterize this activity.

20. As reported previously, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) launched, in March 1999, a three-year Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Global Programme has been developed by the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). It focuses on the role played by organized crime, trafficking patterns, the nature of the criminal syndicates involved, the role of corruption, the impact of clandestine migrant communities, the trafficking of women and children for purposes of forced/exploitative labour, commercial sexual exploitation and unlawful adoption. One of its primary objectives is to collect data and make an inventory of best practices used in addressing the organized crime of trafficking. A number of country projects have recently commenced implementation under the Programme.

C. United Nations activities against trafficking in the areas of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance

21. UNICEF supports major studies of trafficking that are taking place around the world, including a study of trafficking in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) region under way at the University of Pittsburgh. UNICEF also provides input into the UNODCCP Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Beings (see para. 20 above). In the Asian and Pacific Region, UNICEF is a partner in a number of projects that specifically address the trafficking of women and children.

22. UNHCR acknowledges that as borders are tightened throughout the world, an increasing proportion of asylum-seekers are using the services of people smugglers and traffickers to escape persecution. Recent events have also demonstrated that refugee populations are particularly vulnerable to traffickers who have tricked, coerced or otherwise forced women and girl refugees into situations from which they cannot escape. UNHCR has closely followed the development of the two protocols on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons referred to above and made a number of written and oral interventions into the drafting process. UNHCR has undertaken studies of the trafficking of asylum-seekers into the United Kingdom. More recently, the Office sponsored a study of this phenomenon from a broader European perspective.

23. UNDP continues to address the issue of trafficking at the country level, particularly through its Gender in Development (GID) programme. This programme, which has been developed at the regional, subregional and national levels, focuses attention on violence against women and girls as part of its support for coordinated United Nations systemwide implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Regional Gender Programme of the UNDP Regional Bureau for the Asia-Pacific includes production and dissemination of information resources such as video commercials on trafficking of women. UNDP is also implementing or sponsoring a number of specific anti-trafficking initiatives including a comprehensive programme for the Mekong subregion. The project, which involves a large number of international and national agencies, aims to develop best practice guidelines based on the evaluation of pilot activities and to train trainers, as well as to offer direct socio-economic alternatives to child and women victims of trafficking and to those most at risk. As noted above, UNDP Nepal is cooperating with a number of United Nations partner agencies and programmes, including OHCHR, in the implementation of a comprehensive anti-trafficking project for that country.

24. ILO deals extensively with the issue of trafficking in the context of bonded labour, child labour and migrant workers. The adoption, in June 1999, of the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182), which identifies trafficking and related exploitation such as child prostitution as one of the worst forms of child labour, is an important step forward in efforts by ILO to combat trafficking in children. Trafficking issues have also been incorporated into the ILO International Programme to End Child Labour (IPEC) and a wide range of anti-trafficking initiatives have been launched under ILO/IPEC at the national and regional levels. In the context of the follow-up to the implementation by States of ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour, ILO has recently invited States to report on the issue of trafficking as an aspect of and a contributing factor to forced labour.

25. The work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reflects an understanding that violence against women includes a wide range of violations of women's human rights, including trafficking. In Eastern and Central Europe, UNFPA has recently enhanced its cooperation with OHCHR and IOM to develop its activities on the issue of trafficking in persons. Its activities focus mainly on counselling, health and reproductive rights of victims of trafficking.

II. ACTIVITIES OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. The International Organization for Migration

26. IOM continues to deal with the issue of trafficking in migrants through, inter alia, information campaigns, counselling activities, technical cooperation, return and reintegration assistance, research studies and policy papers. IOM is currently establishing counter-trafficking focal points in each of its field offices.

27. In Africa, the efforts of IOM in this area have been directed towards raising awareness of the trafficking issue among government authorities and NGOs. IOM has also carried out research on the trafficking phenomenon as it exists in West Africa. IOM reports that regional entities such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have begun to play an important role in helping to curtail irregular migration and trafficking in migrants.

28. In Asia, IOM has taken, where possible, a subregional approach to its counter-trafficking efforts. One of the most important of these initiatives is the Mekong project referred to in paragraph 24 above. Through this project, IOM is providing practical assistance (particularly with return and rehabilitation) to victims of trafficking in Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

29. IOM has also expanded its counter-trafficking activities in Central, Eastern and Western Europe in response to a dramatic increase in the number of persons being trafficked from this region. Mass information campaigns have been undertaken in a number of countries including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine. Protection for victims of trafficking has been provided in several countries of the region in coordination with regional institutions and NGOs. This includes shelter and protection services in Albania and Kosovo. Safe, dignified and voluntary return to countries of origin is offered to trafficked persons stranded in transit or destination countries throughout Europe. The experiences of IOM in this part of the world have recently been incorporated in a publication: "Migrant Trafficking and Human Smuggling in Europe".

30. In the Americas, an intergovernmental consultation, the Puebla Process, has underlined the importance of combating and preventing irregular migration and trafficking in a coordinated way in the region. IOM cooperate closely with the Puebla Process and helped raise awareness and train government officials in several countries.

B. The European regional organizations

31. The previous report contained a detailed summary of European institutional activity in the area of trafficking - focusing particularly on the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). All three institutions have continued to pay close attention to trafficking throughout the period covered by the present report. Several recent developments are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

32. The most significant development within the Commission of the European Communities during the reporting period was a communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament containing proposals for two draft measures, one concerning trafficking in persons and the other concerning sexual exploitation of children (COM(2000)854 final, 21.12.2000). The proposed Framework Decisions require member States to modify their own legislation and penal codes in order to standardize the definition of offences, and the penalties attached to particular offences, throughout the European Union. Once adopted, the Framework Decision on trafficking will be an important step forward in combating trafficking to and from countries of the European Union. In its draft form, the Decision applies both to "trafficking ... for the purpose of labour exploitation" (art. 1) and "trafficking ... for the purpose of sexual exploitation" (art. 2). It addresses the issues of penalties and jurisdiction and also touches upon measures to ensure protection of trafficked persons. A deadline of 31 December 2002 is given, by which time member States are required to have amended their legislation, penal code or other regulations to comply with the Framework Decision. The Framework Decision is expected to be formally adopted following the normal consultation procedure.

33. On 10 June 1999, at the initiative of the EU, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was adopted in Cologne, Germany. In adhering to the founding document, more than 40 partner countries and organizations undertook to strengthen the countries of South-Eastern Europe "in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity in order to achieve stability in the whole region". The Stability Pact is based on the premise that conflict prevention and peace building can only be successful and self-sustaining if progress is made in three key sectors: the creation of a secure environment, the promotion of sustainable democratic systems, and the promotion of economic and social well-being. The most important political instrument of the Stability Pact is the Regional Table, chaired by the Special Coordinator. Three Working Tables have been established to operate under the Regional Table: Working Table I: Democratization and Human Rights; Working Table II: Economic Reconstruction, Cooperation and Development; and Working Table III: Security Issues. A Task Force on Trafficking has recently been established under Working Table I. The Task Force will operate as a facilitative mechanism for all anti-trafficking activities in the region and is expected to be an increased measure of cooperation and collaboration between the principle European organizations, their international counterparts, as well as the non-governmental sector.

34. The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly has continued to raise the issue of trafficking and related exploitation. In January 2001, the Committee recommended that States include, in their national legislation, a specific offence of enslaving and trafficking in human beings, as well as appropriate penalties; recognition of the victims of trafficking as victims in their own right; and the implementation of social, administrative and legal assistance and protection policies. The Committee also raised the issue of "humanitarian residence permits" for illegal immigrants who are victims of domestic slavery. A report on the specific issue of domestic slavery is scheduled to be debated at the Parliamentary Assembly's plenary session in June 2001. On 19 May 2000, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted recommendation No. R(2000)11 on action against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The recommendation contains detailed guidance for Governments of member States on the issue of trafficking and includes special attention to the prevention of trafficking as well as assistance to and protection of victims.

35. At the OSCE Istanbul Summit, held in November 1999, the Heads of State or Government of the participating States agreed in the Charter for European Security to "undertake measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and to end violence against women and children as well as sexual exploitation and all forms of trafficking in human beings. In order to prevent such crimes [they] will, among other means, promote the adoption or strengthening of legislation to hold accountable persons responsible for these acts and strengthen the protection of victims." The OSCE has continued to deal with trafficking through its Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. During 2000, ODIHR provided trafficking-related assistance to a number of countries including Kazakhstan, Krygyzstan, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Projects focused on education, research, training, awareness-raising and institution-building. In June 2000, OSCE-ODIHR organized a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna on the subject of trafficking in human beings. Objectives of the meeting included encouraging participating States to examine their current laws, policies and practices relating to trafficking in order to ensure that they reflect the relevant provisions of international law and OSCE commitments in this field. The meeting also reviewed implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to combat trafficking in human beings, examined the possibilities for further action by OSCE and identified priorities and "next steps", particularly relating to the treatment of victims of trafficking.

C. The Asian regional organizations

36. As noted in the previous report, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries have agreed to develop a convention to address the problem of trafficking in women and children. A draft text has been produced and extensively discussed. As a result of the cancellation of the eleventh SAARC Summit, which was to have taken place in Kathmandu in November 1999, adoption of the draft convention has been postponed.

37. The Association of South-East Asia Nations (ASEAN) has identified the fight against trafficking in women as one of its priorities. Since 1999, ASEAN Ministerial Meetings have stressed the urgent need to strengthen the regional capacity of ASEAN to combat such trafficking. Three ASEAN bodies are currently involved in this issue: the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Chiefs of National Police and the ASEAN Subcommittee on Women (ASC). ASC has recently decided to prepare a concept paper on trafficking to be circulated to ASEAN member countries for their comments. This initiative represents part of the follow-up to the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking in Women and Children (ARIAT) which was launched at a conference held in Manila in March 2000 and which involved the participation of Governments from across Asia as well as international and non-governmental organizations.

D. The Inter-American System

38. As previously reported, the organization of American States recently launched a project on International Trafficking in Women and Children in the Americas: Research on trafficking in women and children for purposes of labour and sexual exploitation. This project is being developed in partnership with the International Human Rights Law Institute (IHRLI) of De Paul University (Chicago, Illinois). On the basis of its experience in the field of human

rights, IHRLI has selected a number of countries of the region from which substantive trafficking-related data are being collected and analysed. These findings will provide the basis for recommendations to the member States for action, and will be published and distributed throughout the hemisphere.

E. Africa

39. It is of some concern to note that very little work has yet been done in identifying trafficking flows within and out of Africa and in formulating appropriate responses. While non-governmental organizations in this part of the world have begun to take up the issue, it is essential that African regional organizations and their international counterparts, including the United Nations, also become involved.

III. CONCLUSION

40. On 12 December 2000 the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights attended a ceremony in Palermo, Italy, marking the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and two Protocols supplementing the Convention. At that event, the Deputy High Commissioner declared his belief that trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, for forced and exploitative labour, including for sexual exploitation, is one of the most egregious violations of human rights which the United Nations now confronts. It is widespread and growing. It is rooted in the social and economic conditions from which the victims come. It is facilitated by practices which discriminate against women. It is cruel indifference to human suffering on the part of those who exploit the services that trafficking victims are forced to provide. The fate of these most vulnerable people in our world is an affront to human dignity and a challenge to every State, every people and every community. The High Commissioner takes the present opportunity once again, to urge Member States to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which can make a real difference in the struggle to eliminate this reprehensible trade in human beings.

41. The connection between human rights and trafficking makes it especially important that the international human rights community, including the Commission on Human Rights, take up this issue with full force and vigour. The human rights community has a special responsibility to ensure that the trafficking issue is not simply reduced to a problem of migration, a problem of public order, or a problem of organized crime. These perspectives are, of course, valid and important. However, in developing realistic and durable solutions we must be prepared to look further - to the rights and the needs of the trafficked person herself.